THE STORY OF A MORMON CONVERT

How He was Lured into Mormonism, and How He Found the Light Again; As Told by Himself.

The brother who tells the following touching story of his deception and subsequent enlightenment is well known to the writer, who also was conversant with many of the facts as they were occurring and is acquainted with several of the persons named. Were it necessary to bolster up the transparent truthfulness of the account itself it could easily be done with affidavits at every point. The author is one of the thousands who have been deceived into a thoroughly sincere belief in the claims of Mormonism, simply because the real facts about this thoroughly false and fraudulent religion were not known to him. His story is written by request, in the hope that it may help other souls to understand this delusion of Satan. It should have a very wide circulation.—J. D. N.

New York, January, 1903.

I was born in South Carolina in 1868, and received a common country school education. I came to New York when nineteen years old. From childhood I was inclined to be of a religious disposition, but date my first conversion to Christianity from the autumn of 1887 after arriving in New York, at a Salvation Army meeting, after which I became a member of the Mount Morris Baptist Church (my ancestors had been Baptists for generations). I lived a fairly consistent Christian life for some years, and then I gradually grew careless and indifferent, and finally ceased to go to church at all.

Previous to this, I had been married, and God had given us three little boys to bless our home. A day came when the two oldest were stricken with diphtheria, and the doctor told me he did not know whether he could save them. How earnestly I prayed for God to spare them to me; and he did. Even then I did not turn from the worldly ways into

which I had fallen. Some time afterward one of them was ruptured so badly that I had to send him to a hospital for an operation. On the night before he was to be sent away he came and put his little arms about my neck and said, "Papa, I love you." My father's heart was deeply touched, and I promised God if my boy came back to me in good health, I would try to be a true and useful Christian again. My prayer was answered once more, but even then I did not go to my church and my pastor as I should have done, but was under the conviction that I ought to serve God in some way.

I was in this condition, when, a few weeks afterwards, I met the Mormon elders. They were in my neighborhood distributing tracts from house to house, and taking every advantage of the opportunities to talk and argue with people who were willing to talk to them. They also held meetings in a hall near by, and hearing of this I went to hear them. I there met an elder named Charles Thomas, of Provo, Utah. He came and sat by me in the meeting, and talked at every opportunity during and after the meeting. Scarcely realizing it, I gave him much information about my religious condition, and estrangement from my church and pastor. As I think of it now, the strange part of it is that at first I felt only repugnance toward him, but before we parted, he had won an invitation from me to my house. After the first call, he and other elders were constant visitors, and won my complete confidence.

They wielded an influence over me which I can hardly understand at the present time, but at the same time I was not an easy convert. It took nearly six months of reading Mormon books, and tracts, and numerous talks in private and in public. They began with a long talk on faith, and kept this up until it was impressed on my mind. About the different sects of Christianity they said that there should be only one church, and that Mormonism was

this one; hiding the fact that the Mormons themselves are split into several sects. Baptism by immersion of course I believed. This right mode of baptism was a point in their favor. Then came the very alluring doctrine they teach of repentence after death, taken from passages like I Peter 4:6. This doctrine practically allows a man to lead a sinful life in this world, and also to hope for forgiveness in the hereafter. But can any one find it taught in the Bible that God gives us any such promise as this? By the way they twist scriptures to suit themselves I was led to believe this doctrine to be true.

By other misuses of the Scriptures I was gradually led to believe that the ministers of all other churches had absolutely no right to administer the ordinances of the Gospel, that is, to baptize and to administer the Lord's Supper; that only the Mormon "Priesthood" had this right, which was handed down to them by Joseph Smith; and that no one can be saved unless he has been baptized by one having this authority. I was led into accepting all these things, and much more nonsense and Mormon fables, very gently and gradually. It seems to me now that my mind must have been as Paul says, II Cor. 4:4, "blinded by the god of this world." However this may be, at the end of about six months, I was ready to be baptized, and on June 22nd, 1901, I was baptized at the lower end of Jersey City in New York Bay, and had hands laid on me "for the reception of the Holy Ghost."

At once I became an enthusiastic Mormon. I gave out Mormon tracts and literature, and sent many of them by mail to the South, and I introduced the elders to many of my friends with the hope that they would also become Mormons. I was so active and earnest that I was rewarded on December 1st. 1901, by being made an officer in the Sunday School, and being ordained as a "priest" at the same time. (See cut)

PRIESTHOOD CERTIFICATE.

This certifies that David J Claridge was ordained to the office of A Priest in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, by Elder J. F. McDuane

Eastern States Mission.

Brooklyn Conference, December 1st 1901

Signed, { Elder Geo. A. Goff
D C Coulam
Presidency Brooklyn Conference

I forgot to say that shortly before I was baptized I had gone to a minister to ask some questions about certain passages in the Bible (a strange minister, not caring to face my own pastor). I told him that I was investigating Mormonism, and after answering my questions, he told me that the Mormons

worshiped Adam as God. I had heard nothing of this before, and went back to the elders, to Elder Thomas, and also to Elder Samuel Neff, the latter being counsellor to the President of this Conference, and both of them flatly and most emphatically denied it. I believed them, thinking it a falsehood against my much maligned friends. They never miss a chance to throw a slur at the ministers for preaching for a salary, and boast themselves of preaching without pay. At the same time, they expect all who are members of their church to pay one-tenth of their incomes into the Mormon treasury. Just where it went to I was never able to find out. I was told it was used for the vicarious works of the church.

I will tell you at this point their attitude on polygamy, as taught me by the elders. They claim that no plural marriages have been celebrated for about eleven years, but that the principles of it are unchanged, it being a direct command from God to Joseph Smith. They hope at some future time to be able to practice it as of old, and as they do now in the Mormon colony in the northern part of the Republic of Mexico. This was told me by Elder Clark, of Provo, Utah.

But to resume my story, about two months after being ordained to the priesthood, I went to hear an anti-Mormon lecture at the Harlem Y. M. C. A. by Dr. D. J. McMillan, of the New York Presbyterian Church, who had lived in Utah for ten years or more. Among other things he said, there was a statement about the awful blood-atonement doctrine, taught first by Brigham Young. Now, I had before had more than a hint about this, as an elder named William Snow had given me a small book entitled "Blood Atonement." Before I had gotten done with it, I made comments of astonishment about some things it contained. Elder Neff asked me to let him see it, I did so and have not seen the book from that day to this. This frightful doctrine is founded on such passages of Scripture as Heb. 9:22, which reads: "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission." However, I did not believe what Dr. McMillan said about this at the time. He also spoke of the Adam-God doctrine. I not only did not believe him, but was indignant that he made such statements. I shook hands and spoke to him at the end of the lecture, and some time later went to him

for a private talk at his own home. My main object was to protest against what he had said about the Adam-God doctrine. He reiterated his statement, and said he could show me these things in authentic Mormon books which he had in his study at his church only two blocks away from where we sat. He almost begged me to go to his study and look at them, which I firmly refused to do, telling him I would try to get some of the elders to come over and talk to him. Now, they had always told me that the ministers were afraid to meet them in argument, and I was more than surprised when he said he would be pleased to meet the elders at any time. I then tried in every way to get them to go and see him, but utterly failed to do so. This was early in February, 1902. Then I tried to banish Dr. McMillan and his lecture from my mind.

One Sunday night I sat talking with an elder in my home, and some one knocked on the door. I opened it to admit the Rev. John D. Nutting, whom I had never seen before, but who had lived some years in Utah, and was doing missionary work among the Mormons, and had heard of me through my own pastor, Mr. Bitting, whom I had slighted and tried to forget. This was early in the evening. I had intended going with the elder to a meeting, but I let the elder go alone, and remained to talk to Mr. Nutting because courtesy compelled me to do so. He talked for more than four hours to me, but I was unreasonable. He re-affirmed all that Dr. McMillan had said, and added more, and spoke about the 2,000 changes that have been made in the Book of Mormon. When he left me he gave me some tracts. One of them contained the exact quotation from a Mormon book called the "Journal of Discourses" where Brigham Young said in 1852, in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City, "Adam is our God, and the only God with whom we have to do. When he came into the garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, *one* of his wives, with him." Now, by this time, I was getting uneasy about this blasphemous doctrine. It had come up so many times, and been denied by the elders. So I took the tract, and went to a Mormon meeting at No. 202 West 23rd Street, the house of Mrs. Lane, and there met Elder John G. McQuarrie, the President of the Eastern States Mission. I showed him in the tract about Adam-God, remarking that it gave

chapter and page in the "Journal of Discourses" where it could be found. He looked at it for a moment, then took it from my hand, and put it in his pocket, saying "If you could see the Journal of Discourses, you would see something else." I got no more satisfaction out of him.

Then several weeks went by, and I got a letter, some more tracts, and an anti-Mormon book written by the Rev. T. M. Lamb, entitled "The Mormons and their Bible." They were sent to me by the Rev. Mr. Nutting from Cleveland, Ohio. Now, this book presents very strong proof of the falsity of the book of Mormon. After reading this lot of literature, I was in an awful state of mind, and could not rest night or day. I determined to go to Dr. McMillan, and look at the proofs he had begged me to look at months before. I wrote to him, and made an appointment to see him in his study at the church. There he laid before me the "Journal of Discourses" with all its horrible blasphemy. Who of you who reads this can imagine my feelings at that moment? There was the Adam-God doctrine in plain print. It had so many times been denied to me. Then I dropped Mormonism.

But everything was doubt and darkness in my mind. Dr. McMillan tried to point me the way, but I could see no light then. Six weeks later, from sheer misery and heartache, I went to pastor Bitting for a talk. Now, after months of correspondence and talks, and the reading of books, I am walking in the light of God's own Gospel, and I have for some time had the witness of the Spirit that I am accepted of God. I have been taken back as a member of the Mount Morris Baptist Church, and my brethren there have given me the hand of welcome.

I will write this as a warning, and with a prayer in my heart that it may prevent others from being deceived as I was. If you are unsettled in your faith, go to your pastors for advice, but never to a Mormon, for they have turned the Gospel into fables. They come as teachers of others, and they are in sad need of the light themselves. Read Matt. 24:24.

I pray daily for those who deceived me that they may get the light from on high, even as I now have. May God grant that the Christians of the East may send the Gospel of Jesus Christ in its purity to them in the West, that they come not here to spread their

darkness among us. For every missionary they send us, we should send them a dozen. "Thou hast tried them which say they are Apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars." Rev. 2:2.

D. J. CLAIBORNE.

The Utah Gospel Mission was incorporated in 1900, with headquarters at Cleveland, Ohio. On its various boards are the names of over fifty men, of nine denominations. Its object is special missionary work among the multitudes of the Mormon people who are otherwise unreached, and among others in the same regions; and its usual methods of work are a special colporter and evangelistic effort, with literature and other instrumentalities especially adapted to the need. The support of all is earnestly solicited. Particulars in full gladly furnished on application. For information, literature, addresses on Mormonism, or the general business of the Mission, address the Secretary, Rev. J. D. Nutting, Cleveland, Ohio.

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enough of its real teachings and workings in the West to be safe and to help keep others safe from its deceptive efforts outside, and to help the Utah work.

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